Behavioral Sciences and the Law
Behav. Sci. Law (2016)
Published online in Wiley Online Library
(wileyonlinelibrary.com) DOI: 10.1002/bsl.2256

Targeted violence against law enforcement officers

Ronald Schouten, M.D., J.D* and Douglas V. Brennan, M.D., M.P.A‡

As highly visible representatives and guardians of society, law enforcement officers (LEOs) are very public figures. Injury or death in the line of duty, whether due to accidents or intentional acts of violence, is an occupational hazard for LEOs. Targeted assaults on police officers, referred to as ambushes in previous literature, are a particularly perplexing problem with significant implications for society at large. In the summer of 2016, the latest in a series of high-profile acts of violence aimed at police occurred, leading to increased examination of the acts themselves and their causes. This article examines recent trends in assaults on LEOs, focusing on predatory rather than reactive attacks, and applies a threat assessment model to a case of targeted violence against police. We use *State of Washington v. Christopher Monfort* (2015), a prosecution for arson, assault with intent to murder, and murder, as a case example, to examine how the threat assessment model, and the concepts of affective versus predatory violence help in understanding targeted violence against LEOs, assessing its risk, and managing it. **Copyright © 2016 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.**

THE NATURE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST LAW ENFORCEMENT

Law enforcement is an inherently hazardous profession. Officers are at risk for duty-related accidents and illnesses, as well as intentional assaults that result in injury or death (Brandl & Stroshine, 2012). Assaults occur spontaneously during arrests, investigations, or pursuit of suspects. In most cases, these assaults are unplanned acts of violence that arise in an effort to resist arrest, although they may also be opportunistic expressions of hostility during an encounter between law enforcement officers (LEOs) and someone who rejects police authority and presence. These unplanned assaults have been referred to by some scholars as spontaneous ambushes (Fachner & Thorkildsen, 2015).

Assaults on LEOs may also be planned violent acts of retaliation, efforts to advance a criminal enterprise or extremist ideology mission (Gruenewald, Dooley, Suttmoeller, Chermak, & Freilich, 2016), or an effort to provoke a police-involved shooting in pursuit of suicide by cop (Mohandie, Meloy, & Collins, 2009). The latter type of planned

* Correspondence to: Ronald Schouten, M.D., J.D., Director, Law & Psychiatry Service, Massachusetts General Hospital, Associate Professor of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School, One Bowdoin Square, 10th Floor, 15 New Chardon Street, Boston, MA 02114, U.S.A. E-mail: rschouten@mgh.harvard.edu
†Harvard Medical School, One Bowdoin Square, 10th Floor, 15 New Chardon Street, Boston, MA 02114, U.S.A
‡MGH/McLean Psychiatry Residency Program, Clinical Fellow in Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA

Copyright © 2016 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

and targeted violence against LEOs has been referred to as entrapment ambushes (Fachner & Thorkildsen, 2015). As we discuss in the following, we believe that the distinction between spontaneous and entrapment ambushes is significant and may be better conceptualized in terms of reactive versus predatory violence.

TRENDS IN VIOLENCE AGAINST LAW ENFORCEMENT

The most recent available statistics on anti-police assaults, which include fatal and non-fatal assaults through 2014, suggest that violence against police has not been trending upward. The Department of Justice's "Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted" (LEOKA) statistics for 2013 (FBI, 2014) collected data from 11,468 law enforcement agencies that employed 533,895 officers. Collectively, those officers served 78.2% of the U.S. population. The data from that survey revealed that 49,851 (9.3%) of the officers surveyed had been assaulted. Of these, 14,565 (29.2% of those assaulted; 3% of the total) sustained injuries. Twenty-seven officers (0.19% of those injured; 0.005% of the total) suffered fatalities, making 2013 the safest year on record for police, at least from a statistical standpoint.

Examining potentially lethal attacks, those in which the offender displays a firearm, Bierie and colleagues observed a spike in these events in 2011, with an increase from 1.75 per 10,000 arrestees in 2005 to 7.0 per 10,000 arrestees in 2011.However, lethality remained constant at 25 deaths per 1,000 shooting incidents, suggesting that the decrease in police homicides was not attributable to changes in emergency medical response or equipment that would increase survivability (Bierie, Detar, & Craun, 2016). Instead, it may reflect a general decline in acts of lethal violence directed at police officers.

THE CURRENT ENVIRONMENT AND PERCEIVED VERSUS ACTUAL RISK

Recent events in the United States and elsewhere raise the specter of LEOs increasingly becoming the targets of planned acts of violence by those seeking to advance criminal enterprises, promote extremist causes, and express anti-police hostility. Such events are exemplified by attacks on police on police officers in Dallas (ABC News, 2016) and Baton Rouge (fox4kc.com, 2016, July 25) in the summer of 2016, as well as the case report below, and social media posts encouraging violence against police.

Whether recent acts of violence represent a trend or an isolated increase, a series of high-profile cases has highlighted violence by and against police and raised concerns about the relationship between LEOs and the communities they serve. Those concerns first came to widespread public attention with the videotaped police beating of Rodney King by Los Angeles Police Officers in 1991. Since then, officer-involved shootings of civilians and allegations of excessive use of force, including the shooting death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO, in the summer of 2014 (Department of Justice, 2015), have received greater attention and media coverage.

At the time of this writing, the most recent fatal incidents to attract national attention were the deaths of Alton Sterling in Baton Rouge on July 5, 2016 and Philando Castile in St. Paul on July 6, 2016. Both were police-involved shootings. Those events were

Copyright © 2016 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

DOI: 10.1002/bsl

followed within days by two of the worst attacks on police in U.S. history. On July 7, 2016, five police officers were killed and nine wounded in Dallas in an act of targeted violence. Three days later, in Baton Rouge, three officers were killed and three wounded in a targeted attack. The perpetrators, both African-American military veterans, were reportedly angry about police shootings of African-American men and were targeting police officers as retaliation (Fausset, Robles, & Eligon, 2016, July 18; Fernandez, Perez-Pena, & Bromwich, 2016, July 8).

The confluence of these police-involved shootings and increased allegations of police brutality and acts of violence against police has led to a widely held perception that police are increasingly being targeted. By 2015, the majority of the American public (58%) supported the view that there was a "war on police" in the United States (Rasmussen, 2015).

There was considerable anti-police sentiment and civil unrest following the death of Michael Brown. LEOKA statistics for that year revealed a sharp increase, from 27 to 51, in the number of LEOs who died in the line of duty as a result of "felonious incidents." Whether there is a causal link between those events and the 2014 increase in police fatalities is unknown. Notably, the incidence of non-fatal assaults in 2014 dropped slightly to 9% (FBI, 2015).

The LEOKA statistics for 2015 are not available at the time of writing, however, preliminary numbers suggest that the number of fatal assaults for that year, while not likely to be as low as 2013, will again be among the lowest on record (Perry, 2015). Longitudinal LEOKA data reveal that rates of attacks on police have decreased dramatically over the past 25 years, declining through the 1990s and then maintaining a steady level since then (Fachner & Thorkildsen, 2015), consistent with overall violent crime trends in the United States. The extent to which the attacks on police in Dallas and Baton Rouge will define a different trend for 2016 is unknown at this time.

Based on these statistics, the actual number of fatal felonious attacks on LEOs is at odds with what would be expected, given the inherently dangerous nature of police work. Police are charged with preventing crime and apprehending perpetrators, putting them in conflict with suspected and actual perpetrators of crimes. They actively seek encounters with suspects, who may have a propensity for violence and lack respect for authority. In the course of performing their duty to protect the public, police officers can find themselves in the sensitive and potentially volatile position of protecting protestors who are protesting the actions of the police themselves.

There are a number of possible explanations for the lower-than-expected number of fatal assaults. It may well be the case, as the LEOKA data and Bierie et al. suggest, that fatal and nonfatal assaults are decreasing rather than increasing. This could reflect overall positive societal attitudes towards police or a general unwillingness to resort to violence, in spite of the perception of increased police bias against minority populations and use of excessive force. Instead, as one would hope in a constitutional democracy, those concerns may be expressed through peaceful protests, community action, and collective efforts to identify and resolve conflicts.

Decreases in lethal violence against police from previous decades could also reflect the overall decrease in violent crime; increased availability of level I trauma services and emergency medical response; training and equipment that protect officers from assault and allow them to prevent, deter, or counter any attacks; and deterrence due to the severity of criminal penalties for assaults on police officers (Fridell, Faggiani, Taylor, Brito, & Kubu, 2009).

Copyright © 2016 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

DOI: 10.1002/bsl

Regardless of the potential explanations, there is a clear disconnect between the actual and perceived risk of fatal attacks on LEOs. This can be accounted for by heuristics and biases that influence risk perception. These are subjective factors that influence the perceived severity of a given type of event and the probability that it will occur. One of the biases, probability neglect, results in overestimates of the likelihood of events if they arouse strong emotional response, such as repugnance (Sunstein, 2003). The availability heuristic (Tversky & Kahneman, 1973) is another cognitive mechanism that affects our perception of the probability that a given type of event will occur. Events are perceived to be more likely to occur if memories of similar events can easily be brought to mind. When a similar occurrence is within easy memory, we tend to overestimate the likelihood of such an event reoccurring. Each additional incident of violence against police increases the likelihood that the availability heuristic will come into play. This effect is enhanced by 24-hour cable news coverage and the rapid spread of information via the Internet and social media.

Both of these mechanisms would be expected to be at work with regard to perceptions of violence against police. Probability neglect comes into play because these acts arouse strong emotions, leading law enforcement professionals and their families, as well as community members who have positive views of law enforcement, to overestimate the probability of such events occurring. In addition, those who identify with the social order and authority represented by police (Kent, 2010) are likely to perceive such assaults as attacks on society as a whole, and on themselves as members of society.

Similarly, both probability neglect and the availability heuristic would influence perceptions of the extent of excessive use of force by police, which increased in 2014 (Kuhns, Dolliver, Bent, & Maguire, 2016), further enhancing community tensions.

INTENTIONAL VIOLENCE AGAINST LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS: KEY CONCEPTS FROM THREAT ASSESSMENT

Affective versus predatory violence

Assigning human behavior to dichotomous categories is challenging, at best. Nevertheless, it is useful to divide acts of violence into two broad categories: emotional or affective violence; and predatory violence (Meloy, 2006; Siegel & Victoroff, 2009). The former, also referred to as reactive violence, is impulsive and generally a response to some recent or immediate stimulus, stressor, or provocation. Affective violence in most cases is intentional, as opposed to being an automatism, but any premeditation is brief and the act is not the product of specific planning. Rather, the decision to aggress occurs in the moment. Examples of affective violence include road rage, physical altercations fueled by alcohol or other substances, and acts of reactive physical aggression due to serious mental disorders. In the law enforcement context, examples can include violent resistance by out of control individuals or subjects who become suddenly aggressive during police contacts, such as during traffic stops or investigations (Gruenewald *et al.,* 2016), or during police response to intimate partner violence complaints (Kercher, Swedler, Pollack, & Webster, 2013).

In contrast to the impulsivity of its affective counterpart, predatory violence is purposeful. The victim is selected in advance and the attack is the result of planning

Copyright © 2016 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

DOI: 10.1002/bsl

and preparation. The planning period need not be long; what distinguishes predatory from affective violence is that predatory violence is goal-directed. That goal may be acquisition of a practical advantage or concrete benefit, such as eliminating a rival or witness, earning membership in a gang or other group, or advancing a cause or belief. The goal may also be more purely psychological in nature: exacting revenge, expressing anger and frustration over an unsatisfied grievance, satisfying a penchant for violence, or fulfilling a desire for notoriety (Borowitz, 2005).

THREAT ASSESSMENT AND TARGETED VIOLENCE

In work growing out of the U.S. Secret Service Exceptional Case Study Project, Fein, Vossekuil, and Holden (1995) defined threat assessment as a "set of investigative and operational techniques that can be used by law enforcement professionals to identify, assess, and manage the risks of targeted violence and its potential perpetrators" (p. 2).

Borum, Fein, Vossekuil, and Berglund (1999) describe three principles of threat assessment:

- Targeted violence is the result of an understandable and often discernible process of thinking and behavior.
- Violence stems from an interaction among the potential attacker, past stressful events, a current situation, and a target.
- The key to investigation and resolution of threat assessment cases is identification of the subject's "attack related" behaviors.

In acts of targeted violence, the perpetrator plans the attack by selecting the target(s), choosing the timing of the attack, deciding how to approach the target, and selecting the means for inflicting harm (Borum *et al.*, 1999). Thus, targeted violence is predatory rather than impulsive or spontaneous (Fein & Vossekuil, 1998).

Neither the sociological nor criminological literatures typically reference the concept of targeted violence against LEOs; however, related concepts are used. The concept of "ambush" is used to describe and differentiate types of attacks on police officers, with ambushes divided into two types: entrapment and spontaneous ambushes (Fachner & Thorkildsen, 2015). Entrapment ambushes are consistent with traditional conceptualizations of ambush: the victim is purposely lured into a trap where the assailant carries out the assault. The location is often one where the assault will be concealed and from which the assailant can escape without detection (Meyer, Magedanz, Feimer, Chapman, & Pammer, 1986). From a targeted violence perspective, the entrapment ambush is predatory violence, complete with planning and a goal.

While entrapment ambushes would qualify as acts of targeted violence, entrapment is not a necessary element of targeted violence. Rather than luring the intended victim to a specific location to carry out an attack, the assailant may stalk or approach LEOs wherever they happen to be, after planning an attack on LEOs as a group without identifying specific victims in advance.

For example, in March 2015, Michael Ford approached the Landover, Maryland, police station and began firing at police vehicles and ambulances parked in front of the station. As he did so, his two brothers filmed the assault on their cell phones. Ford, who had a history of bipolar disorder, had reportedly had an encounter with police in

Copyright © 2016 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

DOI: 10.1002/bsl

another state the day before and his motivation was a desire for "suicide by cop"(Bui, Hermann, & Jouvenal, 2015). Christopher Monfort "went hunting" for police officers to shoot and kill as part of his campaign to end police brutality (Monfort, 2014, June 25). Maurice Clemmons walked into a coffee shop in Pierce County, Washington, and murdered four police officers as they were working on their laptops. Clemmons, who had a long criminal history and had had a recent encounter with police, had six accomplices (Miletich & Green, 2009). "Targeted violence" is likely a more useful term than entrapment ambushes, as it encompasses a wider range of purposeful assaults on LEOs than merely entrapment.

Spontaneous ambushes, on the other hand, are defined as "unprovoked attacks without long-term methodical planning." They are crimes of opportunity, with the decision to attack made at the time of the encounter (Fachner & Thorkildsen, 2015). Spontaneous ambushes represent acts of reactive or impulsive violence. In addition to those that occur during arrests or when responding to domestic violence complaints, spontaneous assaults are exemplified by assaults on police that occur during traffic stops. Traffic stops of individuals who are part of the Sovereign Citizens movement have been particularly hazardous for LEOs (Department of Homeland Security, 2015; Gruenewald *et al.*, 2016).

In their analysis of police homicides by right wing extremists, Gruenewald and colleagues used a homicide storyline approach to conduct a combined qualitative–quantitative analysis of 30 cases of far-right extremist anti-police homicides (Gruenewald *et al.*, 2016). They identified four categories of motive or purpose for the homicides:

- *Avoiding arrest* (14; 47%) – the subject had previously committed crimes and was avoiding arrest;
- *Mission offenses* (8; 27%) – the subject was making an ideological statement by killing police;
- *Defending property* (6; 20%) – the subject viewed police presence on his property as a threat to civil liberties;
- *Defending family* (2; 7%) – the subject perceived police officers as being a threat to his family.

Of these four categories, only the second qualifies as predatory violence, although all four reflect underlying anti-police beliefs. The other three constitute acts of affective or impulsive violence. Whether similar proportions would hold for anti-police homicides carried out by other extremists or by perpetrators who are not ideologically motivated is a matter for future study.

Covington, Huff-Corzine, and Corzine (2014) used a criminal event perspective (CEP) model to understand violence against police. Similar to routine activities theory, it focuses less on the offender and more on the crime and its context. Violence against police officers, they argue, is a complex problem that requires consideration of individual, contextual, and social factors (Covington *et al.*, 2014). Those contextual and social factors include political issues, socioeconomic and racial conflicts, and policing styles (Jacobs & Carmichael, 2002; Kaminski & Stucky, 2009; Wilson & Zhao, 2008). Their approach is consistent with the threat assessment approach described earlier (Borum *et al.*, 1999) but with a greater emphasis on societal factors.

Copyright © 2016 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

DOI: 10.1002/bsl

Gruenewald *et al.* (2016) also used the CEP approach in analyzing 30 anti-police homicides by far-right extremists, focusing on the multidimensional nature of such events, including offender characteristics, reasons for the homicides, warning signs, and behavioral and environmental contexts. The CEP model resembles the threat assessment approach to assessing and managing targeted violence, recognizing that violence is the result of complicated and often-varying interactions among the potential perpetrator, the potential target, past stressful events in the life of the perpetrator, and his or her current situation (Borum *et al.*, 1999).

CASE EXAMPLE: *STATE OF WASHINGTON V. CHRISTOPHER MONFORT*

The following case example illustrates many of the concepts discussed in previous sections, and provides a prime example of acts of targeted violence against police officers motivated by a political purpose. We are familiar with this case as one of the authors (Schouten) was the prosecution's rebuttal expert on the issue of the insanity defense (*State of Washington v. Christopher Monfort,* 2015).

On October 31, 2009, Christopher Monfort attacked Officer Timothy Brenton and Officer Brit Sweeney, a trainee officer, while they were parked in a patrol car, debriefing after a routine traffic stop. Monfort, who had been searching for police officers to shoot, observed the parked cruiser, drove up next to it, and fired an assault rifle into the car and drove off. Officer Brenton was killed and Officer Sweeney was wounded. Nine days earlier, Monfort had set fire to police vehicles at a City of Seattle maintenance yard using homemade improvised explosive devices. He went to the maintenance yard armed, with the hope that police officers would respond to the fire, giving him an opportunity to shoot them. No officers responded and he fired no shots at the maintenance yard worker who appeared, as Monfort only wished to shoot police officers. Monfort left fliers at the yard, conveying that the police had abused their power and authority.

Monfort had no history of substance abuse or serious mental illness, although the defense expert opined that he suffered from delusional disorder at the time of the crimes. The prosecution rebuttal expert maintained that Monfort suffered from a personality disorder. Monfort had no history of criminal convictions or psychiatric hospitalizations; however, he had been expelled from an alternative middle school for being angry and unmanageable and had a history of oppositional behavior as a child and adolescent. He had a special education evaluation in high school that yielded a diagnosis of learning disability. Psychotherapy was recommended but never occurred. Monfort had a history of depression and was the victim of bullying and racism as a child. There was a family history of violence, which he witnessed, as well as of criminal behavior. He was married, but had been separated from his wife for many years at the time of the offenses and had still not divorced at the time of the offenses. Monfort dated but his romantic relationships did not last; he had some friendships but led a largely solitary existence. He was a college graduate, having returned to school as an adult while working full time. While in college, Monfort developed an interest in, and passion for, the Bill of Rights and American history. Following the Rodney King beating in Los Angeles, he became increasingly focused on police brutality and

Copyright © 2016 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

DOI: 10.1002/bsl

injustices of all types. He himself was never the victim of police brutality, but his interest in and anger about the issue was fed by newspaper and online accounts, including YouTube videos. Monfort graduated with honors from the University of Washington 18 months before the attacks on Officers Sweeney and Brenton. He was 41 years old at the time of the offenses.

Monfort possessed a number of characteristics consistent with the definition of right-wing extremists used by the United States Extremist Crime Database, in which far-right extremists are described as:

> fiercely nationalistic, anti-global, suspicious of federal authority and reverent of individual liberties, especially their right to own guns and be free of taxes. They believe in conspiracy theories involving imminent threats to national sovereignty or personal liberty and beliefs that their personal or national "way of life" is under attack. Sometimes such beliefs are vague, but for some the threat originates from specific racial or religious groups. They believe that they must be prepared to defend against this attack by participating in paramilitary training or survivalism (Freilich et al., 2015, p. 380).

Monfort believed that the government was intruding on citizens' rights, that the police were abusing their power, and that all citizens had an obligation to stand up to such tyranny, as had the Founding Fathers. He analogized police brutality to abuses by British soldiers at the time of the American Revolution. He subscribed to conspiracy theories related to the assassination of John F. Kennedy, the 9/11 attacks, and the death of Osama bin Laden.

Monfort carried out the assaults as part of a one-man campaign to stop police brutality. His plan was to shoot police officers at random until police officers who engaged in police brutality, as well as those who stood by and allowed it to happen, got the message that it had to stop. He communicated this message in fliers he left on vehicles at the city maintenance yard on October 22 and hoped that people would draw the connection between those statements and his shooting of Officers Sweeney and Brenton.

At trial, Mr. Monfort raised an insanity defense, which was unsuccessful. Washington State utilizes a strict M'Naghten standard for the insanity defense. A defendant may be found not criminally responsible if, as a result of a mental disease or defect, he is unable to perceive the nature and quality of his act, or is unable to tell right from wrong with regard to the act. (*State of Washington v. Rodney K. Crenshaw*, 1983). His defense team argued that he suffered from a delusional disorder, mixed type with persecutory and grandiose features, which caused him to be unable to appreciate the wrongfulness of his conduct. The prosecution rebuttal expert opined that Monfort suffered from narcissistic personality disorder and borderline features, that Monfort had engaged in a purposeful act of political violence and was fully aware that his behavior was unlawful. Monfort had told the prosecution expert in a taped interview that he had not attempted to recruit others to his cause, explaining that what he planned to do was against the law and others might report him to the police and stop him. He was convicted and in July 2015 was sentenced to life in prison without parole.

DISCUSSION

In examining acts of violence, it is useful to consider the interaction of several groups of variables or risk factors: individual, environmental, and situational (triggers) (Fein

Copyright © 2016 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

DOI: 10.1002/bsl

et al., 1995; Schouten, 2008). These factors are both static (such as an individual's past history of violence) and dynamic (such as illness and life stressors) (Douglas & Skeem, 2005). Factors are examined that both increase and decrease the risk of violence (Robbe, de Vogel, & de Spa, 2011).

Because much of the work of threat assessment and management is focused on specific incidents and individuals, individual risk factors are given considerable weight. The question for the threat assessment professional is whether a given individual, with certain characteristics, and in those circumstances, is at an elevated risk of committing an act of violence. Threat management includes efforts to affect dynamic risk factors in order to mitigate risk (Vossekuil, Fein, & Berglund, 2016).

Individual risk factors

It has been well established that there is no profile that allows for prediction of who will engage in acts of violence (Norko & Baranoski, 2005). Nevertheless, certain risk factors have received repeated attention as being correlated with, if not causative of, acts of targeted violence (Schouten, 2008). A sampling of these factors is discussed with respect to Monfort in the following sections.

Mental disorder

One of the individual risk factors for violence most commonly cited in studies is mental illness. Public perception of a direct positive relationship between a diagnosis of mental illness and violence is at odds with research findings, however. While individuals with mental illness are at elevated risk of committing acts of violence (Hodgins, 2008), that risk is determined by factors other than diagnosis alone. Severe mental illness alone is not predictive of violence, but there is an increased risk among those who have severe mental illness and a combination of other factors. These include: a history of past violence, juvenile detention, physical abuse, or parents having been arrested; clinical features of substance abuse or perceived threats (paranoia); and dispositional factors such as age, sex, and low income (Elbogen & Johnson, 2009). Co-morbid substance abuse is a consistent finding for elevated risk of violence among individuals with severe mental illness (Fazel, Langstrom, Hjern, Grann, & Lichtenstein, 2009).

Individuals with mental illness may engage in acts of violence that are motivated by factors other than the symptoms of their illness. In a study of inter-rater reliability of a new coding instrument for assessing the motivation for criminal acts, Penney, Morgan, and Simpson (2016) examined cases of violence by people with major mental illness. In more than three-quarters of the cases (79.2%), the acts were judged to have been motivated by symptoms of the illness. However, in the remaining cases, the act was judged to have been motivated by illness in conjunction with other motivations, such as anger, substance abuse, or other criminal goals.

Notably, Monfort had no history of significant mental illness, although this was a matter of disagreement at trial. Both experts agreed that he had a troubled childhood and adolescence, had been the victim of emotional abuse, witnessed physical abuse in the home, and was the product of a troubled family history. They agreed that he had no history of substance abuse, juvenile detention, or criminal convictions. However, he was reportedly bullied, engaged in bullying behavior, and was prone to angry outbursts as an adult.

Copyright © 2016 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

DOI: 10.1002/bsl

Lone actor terrorists may be the most appropriate group for comparison with individuals who engage in assaults on police officers, irrespective of whether they are ideologically motivated. There is growing research support for the idea that psychological disturbance of some sort is more prevalent among lone actor terrorists than group-based terrorists. (Gruenewald, Chermak, & Freilich, 2013b; Hewitt, 2003) The same appears to be true for criminals who act alone, as opposed to those in groups (Bijleveld & Hendriks, 2003; Hickle & Roe-Sepowitz, 2010). We have found no such studies of individuals who commit felonious assaults on police officers, but hypothesize that the results would be similar.

In their study of lone actor terrorists, Corner and Gill (2015) noted the high prevalence of reported mental health disorders in that population and challenged the value of trying to distinguish between acts of terrorism and violence due to mental illness. Comparing a sample of 119 lone actor terrorists with a matched sample of group-based terrorists, they found significant behavioral differences between the groups, and between lone-actor terrorists with and without mental illness. Lone actors were 13.49 times more likely than group actors to have a mental illness. Lone actors with a mental illness were more likely to have had a recent specific life stressor, to have a history of stress, to have been a recent victim of prejudice, and to have experienced proximate and chronic stress. Their observations were consistent with those in an earlier study by Gill and Horgan (2012).

Both of these studies took on the formidable challenge of attempting to categorize individuals as mentally ill based on multiple information sources rather than direct examination or review of medical records. Other studies have assigned subjects to categories based on "any evidence" of the disorder. For example, Gruenewald, Chermak, and Freilich (2013a) assigned subjects to the "drug/alcohol abuse" category "if there was evidence that they had a history of abusing drugs or alcohol."

In a subsequent article, Corner, Gill, and Mason (2016) improved upon their earlier study by examining base rates of mental disorders in the population. They again found an elevated prevalence of all mental disorders among lone actors versus group terrorists. Notably, compared with the general population, lone actors have a higher prevalence of schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, unspecified personality disorder, and autism spectrum disorder. The prevalence of bipolar disorder was the same in the lone actor and general population groups.

Monfort's crimes were intentional, ideologically motivated acts of violence, regardless of any specific diagnosis. As such, he would be counted as one of those individuals who committed an act of terrorism and also suffered from a mental disorder.

Grievance

Grievances arising from a perception that one is threatened or has been treated unjustly are considered a risk factor for violence of various types. That perception may represent a specific personal grievance that rises to the level of a fixation (Mullen *et al.*, 2009). Alternatively, it may represent moral outrage on behalf of a group with which the individual identifies. Such perceptions may be presented as ideological beliefs (Meloy & Gill, 2016).

Similarly, targeted violence against LEOs may have ideological underpinnings that represent personalized grievances or moral outrage, with goals such as advancing a political or religious cause through publicizing it or destroying identified enemies.

Copyright © 2016 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

DOI: 10.1002/bsl

(Freilich, Chermak, Belli, Gruenewald, & Parkin, 2014; Parkin, Freilich, & Chermak, 2015). For example, Monfort denied ever having been the victim of police brutality himself, but expressed outrage at police treatment of others in the community.

Targeted violence may also have non-ideological goals, such as furthering another criminal act, obtaining revenge, or achieving personal notoriety (Freilich *et al.,* 2014; Parkin *et al.,* 2015). Violent extremist groups and individuals who are motivated by ideology may also engage in non-ideological crime to support their activities (Gruenewald *et al.,* 2016; Parkin *et al.,* 2015). Motivation for such acts is rarely straightforward or singular in nature.

Environmental risk factors

In threat assessment, environmental risk factors are those factors in the subject's external environment that serve to increase or decrease the likelihood of an act of targeted violence. Examples include ready access to targets and factors such as the presence or absence of security personnel, referred to as the guardianship function for law enforcement. Environmental factors determine how conducive the circumstances are to any possible violence.

Much of the sociological and criminological research on anti-police violence has focused on the political, social, and economic environment and how it affects the likelihood of assaults against LEOs. This research suggests factors that could prove useful in applying the threat assessment model to anti-police targeted violence.

Jacobs and Carmichael (2002) found that fatal and non-fatal assaults on police were positively correlated with disparity between African-American and White economic resources in a community, but negatively correlated with having an African-American mayor. Kaminski and Stucky (2009) reanalyzed that data, plus data from additional cities, and found an inverse relationship between assaults on police and the presence of African-American city council members.

With regard to environmental risk factors, Monfort had ready access to weapons and possible law enforcement targets. Seattle was a hotbed of anti-police sentiment related to police brutality and other anti-government sentiment, and information about alleged acts of police brutality was readily available. While he was not a member of a group and did not receive any direct encouragement from one, he received support from the general anti-police atmosphere, even though he viewed his actions as a matter of personal obligation to the community.

Situational risk factors

Commonly referred to as "triggers" in the threat assessment literature, situational risk factors can be thought of as the spark that ignites the fuel and oxygen provided by individual and environmental risk factors. Considered in this way, they are the event or events that set in motion an act of violence that has been waiting to happen – the straw that breaks the camel's back. Examples can include sudden losses (e.g. of a job, or a relationship), financial reversals, criminal charges, or acute illness. Triggers that have a close temporal relationship to the act of violence may be more closely related to impulsive than predatory violence against LEOs. For example, Gruenewald *et al.* (2016), studying anti-police homicides by right-wing extremists, found that the most common triggering event for attacks on police was a traffic stop, followed by response

Copyright © 2016 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

DOI: 10.1002/bsl

to 911 calls and routine police activity. Chronic stressors, giving rise to longstanding grievances, may underlie acts of affective violence.

Situational factors or triggers for Monfort appear to have been the ongoing reports of police brutality in Seattle and elsewhere. Monfort became fixated on the March 2015 beating of a 15-year-old girl in a jail facility, and this may have been the final trigger for him in a long line of grievances against the police. The Seattle Police Department was the subject of highly publicized complaints of excessive use of force that ultimately led to a Department of Justice investigation. In addition, Monfort was laid off from his job in the months prior to the crimes.

In summary, Christopher Monfort provides an example of an individual who engaged in targeted acts of violence against police officers for a specific purpose. His initial attempt to shoot officers at the city maintenance yard clearly meets the criteria for an entrapment ambush (Fachner & Thorkildsen, 2015), as he went to the site armed and set off incendiary devices with the hope that police officers would respond and he could shoot them. Monfort's wounding of Officer Sweeney and the murder of Officer Brenton did not involve him luring them anywhere, but rather, as he explained to the prosecution rebuttal expert, was him going "hunting" for officers to kill. Regardless of whether this was entrapment or a spontaneous ambush occasioned by him coming across their police cruiser, it was a targeted act of violence against members of a specific group that he planned methodically, even if his individual victims were not identified in advance.

CONCLUSION

The threat assessment model, specifically the concepts of affective versus predatory violence, holds promise for understanding targeted violence against LEOs, assessing its risk, and managing it. Violence is the product of the constantly changing interaction among numerous individual, environmental, and situational risk factors, and assessment of its risk requires attention to historical and dynamic factors that can increase risk or lower it.

Research on targeted violence against LEOs faces some of the same challenges as research on workplace homicides and terrorism. The sample size of such events and perpetrators is small, limiting the ability to draw conclusions. In addition, many perpetrators either commit suicide or are killed by law enforcement in the course of repelling the attack or attempting to apprehend the perpetrator, or are otherwise unavailable for interview and study (Borum *et al.*, 1999; Schouten, 2008). As a result, future studies will rely upon data such as that utilized by Corner and Gill (2015) or a subset of Gruenewald *et al.*'s (2016) data. Over time, this will allow for comparisons to identify similarities and differences between those who commit assaults on police officers and other lone actors with varying motivations, with the goal of identifying both risk and protective factors that will allow for management of such risks.

REFERENCES

Bierie, D. M., Detar, P. J., Craun, S. W. (2016). Firearm violence directed at police. *Crime & Delinquency*, *62* (4), 501–524.

Copyright © 2016 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

DOI: 10.1002/bsl

Bijleveld, C., & Hendriks, J. (2003). Juvenile sex offenders: Differences between group and solo offenders. *Psychology, Crime & Law*, *9*(3), 237–245.
Borowitz, A. (2005). *Terrorism for Self-Glorification: The Herostratos Syndrome*. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press.
Borum, R., Fein, R., Vossekuil, B., & Berglund, J. (1999). Threat assessment: defining an approach for evaluating risk of targeted violence. *Behavioral Sciences & the Law*, *17*(3), 323–337.
Brandl, S., & Stroshine, M. (2012). The physical hazards of police work revisited. *Justice Quarterly*, *15*, 262–282.
Bui, L., Hermann, P., & Jouvenal, J. (2015). Brothers filmed attack on police station that left officer dead, authorities say. *Washington Post*. Retrieved on March 14, 2016 from https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/police-take-third-brother-into-custody-in-shooting-of-police-officer/2016/03/14/74b97f36-e9e6-11e5-b0fd-073d5930a7b7_story.html
Corner, E., & Gill, P. (2015). A False Dichotomy? Mental Illness and Lone-Actor Terrorism. *Law and Human Behavior*, *39*(1), 23–34.
Corner, E., Gill, P., & Mason, O. (2016). Mental Health Disorders and the Terrorist: A Research Note Probing Selection Effects and Disorder Prevalence. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, *39*(6), 560–568.
Covington, M. W., Huff-Corzine, L., & Corzine, J. (2014). Battered Police: Risk Factors for Violence Against Law Enforcement Officers. *Violence and Victims*, *29*(1), 34–52.
Department of Homeland Security (2015). *Sovereign Citizen Extremist Ideology Will Drive Violence at Home, During Travel, and at Government Facilities*. Washington, D.C.: Department of Homeland Security. IA-0105-15
Department of Justice (2015). *Department of Justice Report Regarding the Criminal Investigation into the Shooting Death of Michael Brown by Ferguson, Missouri Police Officer Darren Wilson*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice.
Douglas, K. S., & Skeem, J. L. (2005). Violence risk assessment - Getting specific about being dynamic. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, *11*(3), 347–383.
Elbogen, E. B., & Johnson, S. C. (2009). The Intricate Link Between Violence and Mental Disorder. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, *66*(2), 152–161.
Fachner, G., & Thorkildsen, Z. (2015). *Ambushes of Police: Environment, Incident Dynamics, and the Aftermath of Surprise Attacks Against Law Enforcement*. Washington, D.C.: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.
Fausset, R., Robles, F., & Eligon, J. (2016, July 18). Online Trail Illuminates Baton Rouge Gunman's Path to Violence. *New York Times*. Retrieved on July 19, 2016 from http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/19/us/baton-rouge-shooting.html
Fazel, S., Langstrom, N., Hjern, A., Grann, M., & Lichtenstein, P. (2009). Schizophrenia, Substance Abuse, and Violent Crime. *Jama-Journal of the American Medical Association*, *301*(19), 2016–2023.
FBI. (2014). *Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted, 2013*. Washington, D.C. Retrieved on March 14, 2016 from https://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/leoka/2013/leoka-home
FBI. (2015). *Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted, 2014*. Washington, D.C. Retrieved on March 14, 2016. from https://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/leoka/2014
Fein, R. A., & Vossekuil, B. (1998). *Protective intelligence and threat assessment investigations: A guide for state and local law enforcement officials*. Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Justice.NIJ/OJP/DOJ Publication No. NCJ 170612
Fein, R. A., Vossekuil, B., & Holden, G. A. (1995). *Threat assessment: an approach to prevent targeted violence*. Washington, D.C.Retrieved from
Fernandez, M., Perez-Pena, R., & Bromwich, J. E. (2016, July 8). Five Dallas Officers Were Killed as Payback, Police Chief Says. *New York Times*. Retrieved on July 9, 2016 from www.nytimes.com:2016:07:09:us:dallas-police-shooting.html
fox4kc.com. (2016, July 25). Rapper claims gunman who shot, killed three Baton Rouge officers sent him manifesto just before shooting. Retrieved from http://fox4kc.com/2016/07/25/rapper-claims-gunman-who-shot-killed-three-baton-rouge-officers-sent-him-manifesto-just-before-shooting/
Freilich, J. D., Chermak, S. M., Belli, R., Gruenewald, J., & Parkin, W. S. (2014). Introducing the United States Extremist Crime Database (ECDB). *Terrorism and Political Violence*, *26*(2), 372–384.
Fridell, L., Faggiani, D., Taylor, B., Brito, C. S., & Kubu, B. (2009). The impact of agency context, policies, and practices on violence against police. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, *37*(6), 542–552.
Gill, P., & Horgan, J. (2012). *Tracing the Motivations and Antecedent Behaviors of Lone-Actor Terrorism*. PA: Retrieved from University Park.
Gruenewald, J., Chermak, S., & Freilich, J. D. (2013a). Distinguishing "Loner" Attacks from Other Domestic Extremist Violence: A Comparison of Far-Right Homicide Incident and Offender Characteristics. *Criminology & Public Policy*, *12*(1), 65–91.
Gruenewald, J., Chermak, S., & Freilich, J. D. (2013b). Far-Right Lone Wolf Homicides in the United States. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, *36*(12), 1005–1024.
Gruenewald, J., Dooley, K. M. G., Suttmoeller, M. J., Chermak, S. M., & Freilich, J. D. (2016). A mixed-method analysis of fatal attacks on police by far-right extremists. *Police Quarterly*, *19*(2), 216–245.

Copyright © 2016 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

DOI: 10.1002/bsl

Hewitt, C. (2003). *Understanding Terrorism in America*. London: Routledge.
Hickle, K. E., & Roe-Sepowitz, D. E. (2010). Female juvenile arsonists: An exploratory look at characteristics and solo and group arson offences. *Legal and Criminological Psychology*, *15*(2), 385–399.
Hodgins, S. (2008). Violent behaviour among people with schizophrenia: a framework for investigations of causes, and effective treatment, and prevention. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London. Series B, Biological Sciences*, *363*, 2505–2518.
Jacobs, D., & Carmichael, J. T. (2002). Subordination and violence against state control agents: Testing political explanations for lethal assaults against the police. *Social Forces*, *80*(4), 1223–1251.
Kaminski, R. J., & Stucky, T. D. (2009). Reassessing Political Explanations for Murders of Police. *Homicide Studies*, *13*(1), 3–20.
Kent, S. L. (2010). Killings of Police in US Cities since 1980: An Examination of Environmental and Political Explanations. *Homicide Studies*, *14*(1), 3–23.
Kercher, C., Swedler, D. I., Pollack, K. M., & Webster, D. W. (2013). Homicides of law enforcement officers responding to domestic disturbance calls. *Injury Prevention*, *19*(5), 331–335.
Kuhns, J. B., Dolliver, D., Bent, E., & Maguire, E. R. (2016). *Understanding Firearms Assaults against Law Enforcement Officers in the United States*. Washington, D.C.: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.
Meloy, J. R. (2006). Empirical basis and forensic application of affective and predatory violence. *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, *40*(6–7), 539–547.
Meloy, J. R., & Gill, P. (2016). The lone-actor terrorist and the TRAP-18. *Journal of Threat Assessment and Management*, *3*(1), 37–52.
Meyer, C., Magedanz, T., Feimer, S., Chapman, S., & Pammer, W. (1986). *Ambush-Related Assaults on Police: Violence at the Street Level*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.
Miletich, S., & Green, S. J. (2009). Four police officers shot to death in Lakewood in apparent ambush. *The Seattle Times*. November 29, 2009.
Mohandie, K., Meloy, J. R., & Collins, P. I. (2009). Suicide by Cop Among Officer-Involved Shooting Cases. *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, *54*(2), 456–462.
Monfort, C. (2014, June 25). [Video recorded interview.].
Mullen, P. E., James, D. V., Meloy, J. R., Pathe, M. T., Farnham, F. R., Preston, L., … Berman, J. (2009). The fixated and the pursuit of public figures. *Journal of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology*, *20* (1), 33–47.
News, A. B. C. (2016). *Dallas Police shed light on gunman's possible motives*. New York: ABC News.
Norko, M. A., & Baranoski, M. V. (2005). The state of contemporary risk assessment research. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry-Revue Canadienne De Psychiatrie*, *50*(1), 18–26.
Parkin, W. S., Freilich, J. D., & Chermak, S. M. (2015). Ideological Victimization: Homicides Perpetrated by Far-Right Extremists. *Homicide Studies*, *19*(3), 211–236.
Penney, S. R., Morgan, A., & Simpson, A. I. F. (2016). Assessing Illness- and Non-Illness-Based Motivations for Violence in Persons With Major Mental Illness. *Law and Human Behavior*, *40*(1), 42–49.
Perry, M. J. (2015). *Is there really a 'war on cops'? The data show that 2015 will likely be one of the safest years in history for police. AE Ideas*. AE Ideas website. Retrieved on May 7, 2016 from https://www.aei.org/publication/is-there-really-a-war-on-cops-the-data-show-that-2015-will-likely-be-one-of-the-safest-years-in-history-for-police/
Rasmussen. (2015). 58% Think There's a War on Police in America Today [Press release]. Retrieved on May 7, 2016 from http://www.rasmussenreports.com/public_content/lifestyle/general_lifestyle/august_2015/58_think_there_s_a_war_on_police_in_america_today
Robbe, M. D., de Vogel, V., & de Spa, E. (2011). Protective factors for violence risk in forensic psychiatric patients: A retrospective validation study of SAPROF. *International Journal of Forensic Mental Health*, *10*, 178–186.
Schouten, R. (2008). Workplace Violence and the Clinician. In Simon, T. K., & RI (Eds.), *Violence Assessment and Management* (pp. 501–520). Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press.
Siegel, A., & Victoroff, J. (2009). Understanding human aggression: insights from neuroscience. *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, *32*, 209–215.
State of Washington v. Christopher Monfort, No. No. 09–1–07187-6 SEA (Superior Court for King County 2015).
State of Washington v. Rodney K. Crenshaw, 98 789 (Washington Supreme Court 1983).
Sunstein, C. R. (2003). Terrorism and probability neglect. *Journal of Risk and Uncertainty*, *26*(2–3), 121–136.
Tversky, A., & Kahneman, D. (1973). Availability-Heuristic for judging frequency and probability. *Cognitive Psychology*, *5*(2), 207–232.
Vossekuil, B., Fein, R. A., & Berglund, J. M. (2016). Threat assessment: assessing the risk of targed violence. *Journal of Threat Assessment and Management*, *2*(3/4), 243–254.
Wilson, S., & Zhao, J. (2008). Determining the correlates of police victimization: An analysis of organizational level factors on injurious assaults. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, *36*(5), 461–468.

Copyright © 2016 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

DOI: 10.1002/bsl